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TUG HILL TIMES

Bi-weekly newsletter bringing you the latest news, trainings, and updates from in and around the Tug Hill region.

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ENERGY FORUM HELD AT JEFFERSON COMMUNITY COLLEGE NOVEMBER 12

The Center for Community Studies at SUNY Jefferson (Jefferson Community College) held a public educational forum, "New York's Changing Energy Landscape and Local Considerations," on Tuesday, November 12 at the college's Jules Center. Approximately 70 members of the public attended the two-hour session, which included four presentations and a question-and-answer session.

After introductory remarks by Dr. Daniel Dupee, president at SUNY Jefferson, Joel LaLone, director of the Center for Community Studies, presented recent adult survey results from Jefferson, Lewis, Oswego, and St. Lawrence counties, describing residents' concerns, their expectations, and their opinions regarding energy generation and use. The topline takeaways were that, by a 4:1 ratio, residents are more likely to support than oppose nuclear development locally, but with the most common response remaining to be "need to learn more." The largest resident concerns are affordability issues, and the most common expectations of positive impacts of nuclear plant development are job creation, lower electricity bills, and attraction of other new businesses. There is very little support locally for building data centers.



From left to right: Andy Draper, Research Coordinator, Center for Community Studies; Katie Malinowski, Executive Director, Tug Hill Commission; Dan Dupee, President, SUNY Jefferson; Tom Ortmeyer, Research Professor, Clarkson University; Joel LaLone, Director, Center for Community Studies.

Kevin Lanahan, senior vice president at the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO), provided an overview of the state's power grid, described how it works, and explained the increasing demand for electricity. Much of the information in his presentation was taken from the NYISO's 2026 Power Trends report, with takeaways of: aging generation in the state faces rising outage risks in fossil units that provide essential reliability services; large-load demand (manufacturing and data centers) is rising and harder to forecast, increasing the need for flexible, dispatchable generation; electrification of buildings and transportation has already increased electricity demand and it will continue to rise, impacting reliability especially in winter; winter conditions now drive key reliability risks; and all of these factors have contributed to declining energy reserves.

Continued on page 2.

Newsletter Highlights

- Energy Forum at JCC November 12
- NY Advanced Nuclear Plan Released
- Battery Energy Storage Survey December 11
- RACOG Project Closeout Summary
- Oneida Lake Plan Public Meetings
- DEC Dry Well Reporting
- December 10 Archives Webinar
- NYCOM Planning & Zoning Training Series
- Cornell Local Roads Webinars Available

ENERGY FORUM CONTINUED

Katie Malinowski, executive director of the NYS Tug Hill Commission, provided a regional perspective of what the changing energy landscape described by the NYISO looks like for North Country residents. The four-county Tug Hill region already generates significant amounts of clean energy through hydropower, wind, solar and nuclear. Transmission of generated electrons from where they are generated to where the demand exists is the current bottleneck, with the NYISO's 2025-2044 System & Resource Outlook report highlighting that Northern New York represents an additional target opportunity for bulk transmission upgrades.

Thomas Ortmeyer, research professor of electrical and computer engineering at Clarkson University, focused his presentation on improving understanding of consumer impact and explaining household energy bills. He included data on rising electricity prices over the past decade, which have largely tracked inflation, and electric costs which nationally account for approximately 2.5% of a households' gross income, depending on income level and region. He noted that electricity is increasingly essential to modern life, and that our power grid is in a time of transition and investments will need to be made to increase reliability to meet customer needs and expectations.

NEW YORK ADVANCED NUCLEAR PLAN RELEASED

New York's most recent document related to advancing more nuclear energy development in the state was released this week in Rochester as part of the state's third nuclear summit. The plan and additional information can be found on the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA) website here. NYSERDA will hold a webinar on the new plan January 13, 2027, register here. Additionally, the Tug Hill Commission expects to have a session on the topic at the April 27, 2027, Tug Hill Local Government Conference.

BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SURVEY – RESPOND BY DECEMBER 11

The Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) is asking municipal leaders in the North Country to fill out a survey about battery energy storage systems (BESS). BESS is a growing topic in the North Country, and many municipalities are looking to proactively take action. The information gathered through this survey will help inform ANCA's work to create and compile resources that better serve local decisionmakers. Responses are requested by December 11.



RACOG PROJECT CLOSEOUT SUMMARY WILL HIGHLIGHT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The River Area Council of Governments (RACOG) has developed a new project closeout summary to better document and share the results of completed projects. The one-page summary highlights each project's purpose, participating partners, funding sources, key outcomes, and lessons learned. It provides a consistent way to document accomplishments, recognize the organizations and municipalities involved, and identify valuable insights that can help guide future projects.

The summary also supports RACOG's recently adopted strategic plan by improving shared communication among member municipalities. As projects are completed, these summaries will help RACOG share successful approaches and demonstrate the value of regional collaboration throughout the Tug Hill region. Contact Mickey Dietrich at mickey@tughill.org if interested in receiving an electronic version of the new summary form.

REMINDER: PUBLIC MEETINGS FOR THE ONEIDA LAKE WATERSHED PLAN

The Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board, in cooperation with Madison County and watershed stakeholders, is developing an updated watershed plan for the Oneida Lake Watershed. This plan will describe the lake and watershed, identify issues of concern, and provide strategies to protect the lake. The plan will be prepared in partnership with the people who live, work, visit, and enjoy Oneida Lake and the hills, creeks, and communities that surround it, with guidance from state and local agencies. When completed, this community driven Nine Element Watershed Plan will describe local water quality concerns and provide a strategy to address those concerns. Your ideas, knowledge of the lake and watershed, and thoughts on how to protect Oneida Lake will help guide the plan's development. For more information or to take a short survey, go to: www.enagecny.org/oneida.

Cleveland Meeting: Tuesday, December 1, 5:00 p.m., Cleveland Village Hall, 2 Clay Street, Cleveland, NY.
Zoom Meeting: Wednesday, December 2, 1:00 p.m., ZOOM – Register online.
Constantia Meeting: Thursday, December 3, 5:00 p.m., Constantia Town Hall, 14 Frederick Street, Constantia, NY.



NYSDEC DROUGHT INFORMATION AND DRY WELL REPORTING

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation is currently collecting information from homeowners who have experienced reduced well production or complete loss of water. This reporting helps the state identify areas experiencing groundwater supply issues and better understand the extent of these problems, particularly in rural communities that rely almost entirely on private groundwater wells.

The purpose of the reporting form is to collect more detailed information on local conditions that are not otherwise captured by DEC's own data or partners. The reporting form may be completed by any members of the public including water well owners, well drillers, and environmental professionals. Please note that reported well locations are generalized to the municipal and county level and that personal information such as names, addresses, and business information will not be collected through the reporting form.

NYS ARCHIVES EMAIL PRESERVATION WEBINAR DECEMBER 10

New York State Archives has a webinar titled "Email Preservation and Transfer" scheduled for Thursday December 10 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Approximately 95% of New York's government records, spread throughout its local governments and state agencies, are scheduled for eventual destruction. What about the other 5% whose business, research, or historical value require that they remain accessible forever? And, more specifically, what about the emails that fall within this category? This webinar will discuss emails as permanent records, the challenges of maintaining access to them, and differing roles of local governments and state agencies in the preservation process. They'll also talk about how the State Archives manages the emails in its collections to ensure that they will remain available for future researchers and business users.

The training is free and registration information can be found on the workshop registration page. The NYS Archives also has many recorded webinars that are available for viewing at your leisure, which are available on their webinar page. Registration for the webinar closes at 4:00 p.m. on December 9. The webinar will be recorded for later viewing.

NYCOM 2026-27 PLANNING AND ZONING WEBINAR SERIES

Join the NY Conference of Mayors (NYCOM) in December and January for their 2026-27 Planning and Zoning Webinar Series, presented by NYCOM General Counsel Wade Beltramo. Geared for both new and seasoned municipal officials, these one-hour webinars will provide the most up-to-date information on several topics. Click the session titles below to register for each webinar individually. Participants will be invoiced following the completion of the final webinar. Cost is $20 per webinar for NYCOM members and $50 per webinar for non-members. NYCOM members who register for all four the webinars will receive a discounted bundle rate of $65 total.

Caselaw Update of Zoning Basics & Hot Topics Wednesday, December 9, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. This webinar will provide an overview of planning and zoning law basics. Zoning interpretations, area and use variances, site plan approvals, special use permits, and subdivision approvals will also be covered. Common procedural issues will also be highlighted.

The 2026 SEQRA Updates Wednesday, December 16, 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. 2026 was a significant year for changes to New York's State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). The State amended both the Environmental Conservation Law as well as state regulations as they relate to SEQRA. This webinar will provide a brief overview of the SEQRA process before delving into the new exemptions to the SEQRA process as well as the amendments to the SEQRA regulations.

Common Law Conflicts of Interest, Local Codes of Ethics, and Local Boards of Ethics in the Context of Planning & Zoning Wednesday, January 6, 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. ZBA and planning board proceedings are frequently contentious given that the projects being considered are costly and peoples' property rights are at stake. A constant question that arises is whether one or more officials have a conflict of interest that warrants their recusal from the decision-making process. This webinar will cover the basics of conflicts of interest. The presentation will then turn to the role local codes of ethics and local boards of ethics play in approving or denying land use approvals.

A Primer on AI and Planning & Zoning Wednesday, January 20, 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is pervading our personal and professional lives, with many local officials finding it to be a useful tool for conducting research and getting work done. Municipal officials who are not interested in using AI nevertheless need to familiarize themselves with this technology because it is being integrated into practically every application we use. Moreover, other people are increasingly using AI when interacting with local government officials, including individuals submitting applications to ZBAs and planning boards as well as people who are opposing projects before such boards. This webinar will introduce attendees to the fundamentals of AI before focusing on how local officials can use it to review and analyze land use applications, including how it can be used to compare current applications with previous ZBA and planning board actions to identify potential inconsistencies in the boards' decision-making. The importance of having an AI policy and AI training will also be covered.

CORNELL LOCAL ROADS WEBINARS AVAILABLE

The NYS Local Technical Assistance Program hosted by Cornell Local Roads Program has many webinars and online training courses available for those unable to attend in-person training programs, which generally occur in the spring and summer. Their foundational webinar series, an ongoing series of free webinars focused on important principles key to local highway operations and management, is beginning a winter session run. Each webinar offers a way to learn the basics of a particular topic and with all subjects taken together they cover the foundation of local highway issues. The current series starts on November 17 and continues through March 9, 2027. The webinars are on designated Tuesdays from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

The sessions available through the end of 2026 are Communication Tools (11/17), Surface and Subsurface Drainage (12/1), Highway Liability (12/8), and Traffic Safety (12/15). For information and registration links for the series visit the Cornell Local Roads Program website's Training and Events page.

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